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VENEZUELA GUIDANCE

- For the last several months, since the coup rumors began to surface, the USG has stated its opposition to an extra-constitutional change in government. At the same time, we have encouraged all sides to engage in an open dialogue aimed at diffusing the growing political tension facing Venezuela.
- We have made this position known to all both privately and publicly. To individuals ranging from President Chavez himself to members of the armed forces to leaders of the opposition.
- Despite our best efforts, and those of the international community, political tensions continued to escalate in Venezuela leading to the events of last week, which included clearly violent actions, against peaceful protesters, committed by supporters of the Chavez government, and apparently encouraged by senior members of that administration. These acts triggered the crisis.
- We are proud of the role we played in the mobilizing, together with our hemispheric neighbors, the Organization of American States (OAS), to help confront this crisis as provided under the terms of the OAS Democratic Charter.
- On Saturday night, April 14, the OAS approved a US-supported resolution condemning the alteration of constitutional order and deplorable acts of violence in Venezuela.
- We were also instrumental in the decision by the OAS to send to Venezuela a fact-finding mission headed by Secretary General Cesar Gaviria. We see this mission as a first step in a hemispheric effort to facilitate the restoration of full democratic practices and rights in that country.
- We will continue to work with our hemispheric partners in the OAS to help Venezuela confront this current crisis.

Q: Was the United States pleased to see Chávez go?

A: **AS THE WE HAVE SAID, THE UNITED STATES IS OPPOSED TO ANY EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT.**

THE CURRENT CRISIS IN VENEZUELA WAS PROVOKED BY THE LACK OF A VIABLE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE

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OPPOSITION. THE ALTERATION IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER WAS TRIGGERED BY A SERIES OF UNDEMOCRATIC ACTIONS, INCLUDING ARMED ATTACKS ON PEACEFUL PROTESTERS, COMMITTED OR ENCOURAGED BY THE CHAVEZ GOVERNMENT.

IT IS INCUMBENT NOW UPON PRESIDENT CHAVEZ TO NOT JUST RESUME OFFICE, BUT TO ENSURE THE LEGITIMACY OF HIS GOVERNMENT BY WORKING WITH THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND WITH ALL DEMOCRATIC FORCES IN VENEZUELA.

Q: Was this a coup?

A: THE SITUATION IN VENEZUELA, AS STATED IN THE OAS RESOLUTION, WAS AN ALTERATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER.

THE PEOPLE OF VENEZUELA HAVE SENT A CLEAR MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT CHAVEZ THAT THEY WANT BOTH DEMOCRACY AND REFORM. THE CHAVEZ GOVERNMENT HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO RESPOND TO THIS MESSAGE BY CORRECTING ITS COURSE AND GOVERNING IN A FULLY DEMOCRATIC MANNER.

Q: Was the United States government trying to block an OAS resolution condemning the break in Venezuela's constitutional order?

A: AS WE HAVE SAID BEFORE, THE UNITED STATES NOT ONLY SUPPORTS, BUT HELPED AUTHOR, THE RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE

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**ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES ON APRIL 14 CONDEMNING THE
ALTERATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AND DEPLORABLE ACTS OF
VIOLENCE IN VENEZUELA. THE RESOLUTION ALSO CALLED FOR THE
NORMALIZATION OF DEMOCRATIC RULE AND ASKED THE OAS
SECRETARY GENERAL TO TRAVEL TO CARACAS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
A SPECIAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE OAS HAS BEEN CONVOKED
FOR APRIL 18.**

**THERFORE, IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS THAT WE DID NOT TRY TO
PREVENT OAS ACTION ON THIS CRISIS.**

Q: What is the reaction to the United States of the return to power of President Chávez?

**A: THE PEOPLE OF VENEZUELA HAVE SENT A CLEAR MESSAGE TO
PRESIDENT CHAVEZ THAT THEY WANT BOTH DEMOCRACY AND
REFORM. THE CHAVEZ ADMINISTRATION HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO
RESPOND TO THIS MESSAGE BY CORRECTING ITS COURSE AND
GOVERNING IN A FULLY DEMOCRATIC MANNER.**

**WISELY, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ HAS CALLED FOR NATIONAL
REFLECTION AND DIALOGUE. HE SHOULD SEIZE THIS OPPORTUNITY
TO ENSURE LEGITIMACY BY REACHING OUT TO THE POLITICAL
OPPOSITION, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND TO ALL DEMOCRATIC FORCES IN
VENEZUELA..**

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Q: Was the United States government aware of "coup rumors."

A: FOR MANY MONTHS, WE HAVE HEARD VARIOUS RUMORS ABOUT AN EFFORT TO BRING ABOUT AN UNCONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN VENEZUELA. IN EVERY CASE, WE STRONGLY STATED WHOEVER ASKED THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT SUPPORT ANY EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT.

Q: Did Ambassador Shapiro meet with Pedro Carmona?

A: AMBASSADOR SHAPIRO MET WITH PEDRO CARMONA ON FRIDAY APRIL 12. THE AMBASSADOR URGED CARMONA TO TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS IN ORDER TO RESTORE CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AND NORMALIZE DEMOCRATIC RULE IN VENEZUELA.

Q: Is the U.S. concerned about its oil supply from Venezuela?

A: VENEZUELA HAS ALWAYS BEEN A RELIABLE ENERGY SUPPLIER, AND WE EXPECT THAT WILL CONTINUE.

Q: What is the status of U.S. citizens in Venezuela?

A: WE HAVE NO REPORTS OF INJURIES TO ANY AMERICAN CITIZENS IN VENEZUELA. AMERICAN CITIZENS LIVING IN VENEZUELA HAVE BEEN ADVISED BY THE EMBASSY TO REMAIN IN THEIR HOMES UNTIL THE SITUATION STABILIZES.

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**THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS ISSUED A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT,
ADVISING AMERICAN CITIZENS TO DEFER TRAVEL TO VENEZUELA.**

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